

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2483
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AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 5262

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JA, IS

SUBJECT: JAPAN AND ISRAEL

REF: TOKYO 11065

SUMMARY: SPURRED ON BY EMBASSY TOKYO'S EXCELLENT AND INFORM-
ATIVE ANALYSIS OF "JAPAN, THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE USA" WE
HAVE BEEN TAKING A LOOK AT JAPANESE-ISRAELI RELATIONS AND HOW
THEY AFFECT U.S. INTERESTS. IN DOING SO WE CONSULTED WITH
YEHUDA HORAM, DIRECTOR OF ASIAN AND OCEANIC AFFAIRS AT THE
FOREIGN MINISTRY, AND WITH JAPANESE CHARGE' SUMIO ONO, WHO
HAS JUST RETURNED FROM A MIDDLE EAST CHIEFS OF MISSION
MEETING IN TOKYO. THE PICTURE THAT EMERGES FROM THESE CONVER-
SATIONS AND FROM OUR OWN OBSERVATIONS IS THAT ISRAEL, WHILE
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NOT WITHOUT IMPORTANCE TO JAPAN, IS ALMOST INEVITABLY GOING

TO CONTINUE TO BE OUTWEIGHED IN IMPORTANCE TO THE JAPANESE BY THE ARAB OIL-PRODUCING COUNTRIES. THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT THE JAPANESE WOULD NOT REACT TO A VIOLATION OF UN RESOLUTIONS TO WHICH THEY HAVE SUBSCRIBED - AND WHICH ISRAEL ONLY RELUCTANTLY ACCEPTS - BUT IT DOES MEAN THAT ISRAEL CAN NOT LOOK FORWARD TO EVENHANDED TREATMENT AS LONG AS JAPAN GETS EIGHTY PERCENT OF ITS OIL FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND IS ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN LUCRATIVE ARAB MARKETS. END SUMMARY.

1. ONO TOLD US THAT 17 MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICAN CHIEFS OF MISSION HAD BEEN INVITED TO MEET IN TOKYO IN MID-JULY. (HE WAS THE ONLY CHARGE' PRESENT.) FIFTEEN OF THE 17 WERE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE; THE AMBASSADOR TO LEBANON WAS UNABLE TO GET TO TOKYO, WHILE THE AMBASSADOR TO SUDAN ARRIVED TOO LATE FOR THE MAIN SESSIONS BECAUSE OF THE ATTEMPTED COUP IN KHARTOUM. THE MEETING HAD BEEN CHAIRED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S DIRECTOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST. FOREIGN MINISTER MIYAZAMA HAD TAKEN PART IN THE OPENING SESSION WHILE PRIME MINISTER MIKI HAD LUNCHEDED WITH THE PARTICIPANTS.

2. AFTER CONSIDERING (A) THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, (B) THE OIL PROBLEM, AND (C) TECHNICAL AND OTHER ASSISTANCE, THE CONFEREES HAD TRIED TO DRAW UP A JAPANESE POLICY FOR THE MIDDLE EAST. AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON, TWO THEORIES HAD BEEN PROPOUNDED: (A) THE FIGHTING MAY HAVE WEAKENED THE PLO TO THE POINT THAT IT BECOMES MORE MODERATE IN ITS GENERAL DEMANDS; AND (B) THE OBVIOUS SPLIT AMONG THE ARAB COUNTRIES AS A RESULT OF THE LEBANESE IMBROGLIO MAY HAVE THE EFFECT OF RETARDING EFFORTS FOR A GENERAL MIDDLE EAST PEACE. THE SITUATION WAS JUDGED TO BE TOO FLUID AT PRESENT TO MAKE A VALID JUDGMENT AS TO THE CORRECTNESS OF EITHER THEORY. THERE WAS A CONSENSUS AMONG THE CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS THAT MAJOR NEW PEACE MOVES IN THE MIDDLE EAST WERE NOT LIKELY UNTIL THE NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION WAS IN OFFICE. THEY AGREED THAT A NEW MIDDLE EAST WAR WAS ALSO UNLIKELY AT PRESENT, GIVEN LEBANON AND THE DIVISIONS AMONG THE ARABS. THEY ALSO AGREED THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT BEGIN A WAR AS LONG AS HER SECURITY WAS NOT THREATENED, E.G., BY AN ARMED SYRIAN

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ADVANCE INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON. UN ACTIVITIES WERE CONSIDERED "RATHER MARGINAL" IN MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS, BUT THEY WERE ONE AREA IN WHICH JAPAN COULD COOPERATE. IT WAS RECOMMENDED, THEREFORE, THAT JAPAN NOT HESITATE TO TAKE POSITIONS ON MIDDLE EAST QUESTIONS AS THEY ARISE IN THE UN. (ONO CONFIDED THAT HE HAD BEEN WILLING TO GO FURTHER AND HAD RECOMMENDED THAT JAPAN INDICATE A WILLINGNESS TO TAKE PART IN MIDDLE EAST PEACE-KEEPING EFFORTS; HIS VIEWS HAD BEEN

CONSIDERED A LITTLE ADVANCED.)

3. THE PARTICIPANTS DID NOT FORESEE THAT THERE WAS MUCH LIKELIHOOD OF ANOTHER OIL EMBARGO. THE SITUATION HAD CHANGED CONSIDERABLY SINCE 1973 WHEN OIL PRICES WERE VERY LOW. NOW THE WORLD ECONOMIC SITUATION IS DIFFERENT, AND OIL PRICES ARE HIGH. IT WOULD ALSO BE POLITICALLY DIFFICULT FOR SOME OF THE ARABS AGAIN TO AGREE TO THE USE OF THE OIL WEAPON. EGYPT, FOR EXAMPLE, MIGHT NOT NECESSARILY WELCOME AN EMBARGO, SINCE THE SINAI II AGREEMENT HAD SOMEWHAT CHANGED ITS POSITION TOWARD ISRAEL AND IT IS PLACING HEAVY EMPHASIS ON THE NEED FOR WESTERN ASSISTANCE. NO ONE, HOWEVER, WAS WILLING TO RULE OUT COMPLETELY THE USE OF THE OIL WEAPON. THE MOST IMMEDIATE AND PRACTICAL PROBLEM THE PARTICIPANTS SAW CONCERNED OIL PRICING POLICY. THIS WAS RELATED TO DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CIEC. OPEC HAD CLOSELY FOLLOWED THE LATEST UNSUCCESSFUL CIEC NEGOTIATIONS; IF THE MINISTERIAL-LEVEL CIEC IN DECEMBER DOES NOT MAKE ACCEPTABLE PROGRESS, THE SUBSEQUENT OPEC MINISTERIAL MEETING MIGHT COME UNDER IRRESISTIBLE PRESSURE TO RAISE PRICES.

4. ONO SAID THAT WHEN THE PARTICIPANTS MET AT THE MINISTRY OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INDUSTRY A QUESTION HAD BEEN ASKED ABOUT JAPANESE POLICY IN REGARD TO THE ARAB BOYCOTT. IN REPLY, THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THAT MINISTRY HAD CATEGORICALLY DENIED THAT JAPAN WAS DISCOURAGING BUSINESS DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL. HE HAD GONE ON TO EXPLAIN, HOWEVER, THAT MAJOR BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS IN JAPAN HAVE SUCH A HUGE FINANCIAL AND MANPOWER INVESTMENT IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES THAT ISRAEL SCARELY ENTERS INTO THEIR CONSIDERATION. AS ONO PUT IT, IT WAS NOT SO MUCH THAT THE JAPANESE ARE AFRAID OF ARAB COUNTERMEASURES BUT THAT THE SIZE OF THE TWO MARKETS

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MADE THEM INEVITABLY LEAN TOWARDS THE ARABS. (JAPANESE

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AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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FIRMS, LIKE THEIR EUROPEAN COUNTERPARTS, ARE GENERALLY
WILLING TO SELL TO ISRAEL BUT NOT TO INVEST HERE.)

5. ONO WAS AT PAINS TO EMPHASIZE THAT JAPAN'S POSITION ON
THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE WAS NOT DETERMINED SO MUCH BY THE
OIL AND TRADE ISSUES AS IT WAS BY A STRONG FEELING THAT ONE
COUNTRY SHOULD NOT OCCUPY THE TERRITORY OF ANOTHER. THIS,
HE EXPLAINED, WAS IN A CERTAIN SENSE DUE TO JAPAN'S
"PEACE CONSTITUTION". THE JAPANESE BELIEVE THAT THE
LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS SHOULD BE RESTORED.
UNDER QUESTIONING, HE ADMITTED THAT THESE "LEGITIMATE
RIGHTS" HAD NEVER BEEN DEFINED BECAUSE THE JAPANESE FELT
THEY SHOULD BE WORKED OUT IN A PEACE TREATY BETWEEN THE TWO
SIDES.

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6. AS TO THE RELAEITNSHIP OF THE JAPANESE TO THE PLT, ONO
SAID THAT KADDOUMI HAD NOT BEEN RECEIVED BY THE GOVERNMENT
AS SUCH DURING HIS VISIT TO JAPAN LAST SPRING BUT BY THE
LEADERS OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY. IT WAS TRUE THAT
HE HAD MET PRIME MINISTER MIKI BUT ONLY IN MIKI'S CAPACITY
AS A PARTY LEADER. ONO POINTED OUT THAT THE PLO HAD NOT
YET BEEN ABLE TO MAN ITS OFFICE IN TOKYO; HE STRESSED THAT
THE PLO REPRESENTATIVES WOULD BE TREATED AS PRIVATE FOREIGN

INDIVIDUALS, ALTHOUGH HE ADMITTED THAT SUCH INDIVIDUALS WERE OFTEN RECEIVED AT A HIGH LEVEL IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY.

7. JAPANESE-ISRAELI ECONOMIC RELATIONS CONTINUE AT A LOW LEVEL. THE ISRAELIS WOULD LIKE GREATER TRADE AND SOME JAPANESE INVESTMENT BUT ONO DOES NOT THINK THIS VERY LIKELY. AT PRESENT, TRADE WAS BALANCED AT \$150 MILLION IN EACH DIRECTION AND HE FORESAW LITTLE INCREASE. ISRAEL'S MAJOR EXPORTS TO JAPAN WERE DIAMONDS, POTASH AND GRAPE-FRUIT WHILE JAPAN SENT INDUSTRIAL AND ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT TO ISRAEL.

8. ISRAEL'S VIEWS OF ITS RELATIONS WITH JAPAN, AT LEAST AS GIVEN TO US BY HORAM, DO NOT DIFFER SUBSTANTIALLY AS REGARDS THE FACTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BUT OF COURSE THERE ARE MAJOR DIFFERENCES IN EMPHASIS, NUANCE AND PERSPECTIVE. IN SOME REGARDS, IT IS AS THOUGH THE SAME FACTS WERE SEEN THROUGH DIFFERENT ENDS OF A TELESCOPE. HORAM AGREES THAT THERE WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO BE A JAPANESE TILT TOWARD THE ARABS. IN HIS VIEW THE JAPANESE WILL NOT "NORMALIZE" RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. HE RECALLED THAT EVEN BEFORE THE 1973 WAR RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES HAD BEEN "CORRECT" BUT NOT WARM. AS AN EXAMPLE, HE POINTED OUT THAT THE JAPANESE HAD ADOPTED THEIR OWN INTERPRETATION OF RESOLUTION 242 WHICH WAS CLOSE TO THE ARAB AND FRENCH INTERPRETATIONS. SINCE THE WAR THERE HAS BEEN A STEADY EROSION IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, CULMINATING IN THE PERMISSION GIVEN BY THE JAPANESE TO THE PLO TO OPEN AN OFFICE IN TOKYO. (LIKE ONO, HE NOTED THAT THAT OFFICE HAD NOT YET BEEN OPENED BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF SUITABLE STAFF.) HORAM THOUGHT THAT IF THE JAPANESE WISHED TO BALANCE THEIR POLICY THEY COULD, AMONG OTHER THINGS, MAKE AN EFFORT TO ENCOURAGE TRADE AND COMMERCE WITH ISRAEL

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AS THEY DO WITH THE ARAB STATES. HE DESCRIBED THE JAPANESE APPROACH TO THE BOYCOTT AS MORE "CATHOLIC THAN THE POPE" AND COMPLAINED THAT THEY SEEMED TO GO FURTHER THAN ARAB REGULATIONS WOULD REQUIRE.

9. HAVING GOT THESE POINTS OFF HIS CHEST, HORAM SAID THAT THE ISRAELIS HAD BEEN ENCOURAGED BY THE JAPANESE POSITION DURING THE RECENT SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE ON THE ENTEBBE RESCUE OPERATION. JAPAN HAD MADE ITS POSITION CLEAR BY ITS FAVORABLE VOTE, AND FOR THIS THE ISRAELIS WERE GRATEFUL. HORAM SAID THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD CONCLUDED FROM THIS EPISODE THAT THE JAPANESE WILL LISTEN TO U.S. OVERTURES, PARTICULARLY WHEN THE U.S. HAS A FIRM POSITION AND MAKES ITS VIEWS KNOWN. THIS LED HIM TO SUGGEST THAT THE U.S. SHOULD BE LESS RELUCTANT TO MAKE DEMARCHES TO THE JAPANESE

ON MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS. HE THOUGHT THAT THE POINT SHOULD BE CONTINUALLY MADE TO THE JAPANESE THAT A MORE BALANCED AND EVENHANDED POSITION MIDDLE EASTERN ISSUES WOULD BE OF BENEFIT NOT ONLY TO JAPAN BUT TO THE ENTIRE WESTERN WORLD.

10. COMMENT: WE ARE INCLINED TO AGREE WITH TOKYO'S ANALYSIS THAT JAPAN'S OVERWHELMING ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN THE ARAB OIL-PRODUCING COUNTRIES WILL ALMOST INEVITABLY LEAD IT TO ADOPT POLITICAL POSITIONS WHICH ARE AT LEAST ACCEPTABLE TO THE ARABS, IF NOT MORE. UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW SUCH POSITIONS COULD EVER BE MADE "ACCEPTABLE" TO ISRAEL. JAPAN'S IMPORTANCE AND ECONOMIC STRENGTH IS WELL RECOGNIZED HERE, WHERE THE POINT IS ALSO

MADE THAT JAPAN AND ISRAEL ARE AMONG THE FEW DEMOCRACIES LEFT IN ASIA.

11. WE STRONGLY SUPPORT TOKYO'S SUGGESTION THAT THE U.S. CONTINUE A DIALOGUE WITH THE JAPANESE IN REGARD TO THE MIDDLE EAST. (IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL VIGOROUSLY PRESENT THEIR OWN VIEWS ON MIDDLE EASTERN QUESTIONS). THE POINT SHOULD BE MADE THAT AN UNBALANCED POLICY WILL ONLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE CONTINUATION OF INSTABILITY AND TURMOIL IN THE MIDDLE EAST; EVENTUAL PEACE WILL REQUIRE THAT THE INTERESTS OF ALL SIDES BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. AS SEEN FROM HERE, JAPAN CAN, COMMENSURATE WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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ITS ACKNOWLEDGED ECONOMIC STRENGTH, PLAY A NOT INSIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE UN AND IN OTHER ARENAS ON MIDDLE EASTERN ISSUES. PERHAPS THE JAPANESE ACTION ON THE ENTEBBE CASE FORESHADOWS SOME RECONSIDERATION OF ITS BROADER INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. AT LEAST THE ISRAELIS WOULD FERVENTLY HOPE SO.
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